New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

News Release

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New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

Service providers must reasonably accommodate people with disabilities (08/05/06)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) - People with disabilities still have difficulty getting services in New Brunswick, according to Gordon Porter, chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

"Being able to get access to the services that many of us take for granted is still a concern in New Brunswick for people with a disability," Porter said. "For example, we receive calls alleging discrimination from people with guide dogs, or from people in wheelchairs trying to get a taxi or other services.

"The duty to reasonably accommodate is clear: people with a disability have a right to receive accessible services, provided this would not cause undue hardship to the service provider."

What amounts to undue hardship depends on several factors that are tied to the circumstances of each case. Some of the factors considered are impossibility, excessive costs, serious risk to health and safety, and the impact on others.

The commission has a mandate to help prevent discrimination by informing members of the public about their rights and responsibilities under the *Human Rights Act*. It also investigates and conciliates complaints of alleged discrimination.

"I want to encourage anyone who believes that he or she has been discriminated against, or a service provider with questions about providing an accessible service, to contact us at the Human Rights Commission," Porter said. "We need to work through these issues in our province, and make sure we protect the rights of people with disabilities."

The commission is able to settle many concerns before they become formal complaints, and many formal complaints are settled at the early mediation stage. If a complaint cannot be settled, and there is enough evidence to proceed, a Human Rights Commission board of inquiry can hold a hearing, and if the complaint is proven, order various remedies.

Anyone who has questions about the duty of service providers to make their services accessible, or who would like to file a complaint, may contact the Human Rights Commission at 1-888-471-2233.

08/05/06

MEDIA CONTACT: Francis Young, human rights officer, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2301, or 1-888-471-2233.

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